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*Admonitions and Cautions to
Discharg'd Debtors:*

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693. d 12

S E R M O N

Preached in the

C H A P E L

Belonging to the

P R I S O N o f *Ludgate,*

On Sunday, August 29. 1725.

On Occasion of the

A C T for the RELIEF of *Insolvent Debtors.*

K
By ROBERT DREW, M. A.

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WILLIAM TROTTER



DEUT. VI. 12.

—Then beware, lest thou forget the Lord which brought thee forth out of the Land of Egypt, from the House of Bondage.



HIS Chapter is an Exhortation to Obedience, delivered by *Moses*, to the Children of *Israel*, who were now about to pass over *Jordan*, being at length miraculously conducted, even to the Borders of the promised Land.

A People these were, distinguish'd by such Signs and Wonders, surrounded with such amazing Proofs of an extraordinary Providence attending them, as loudly call'd for the Returns of Love and Gratitude to the Author of their De-

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liverances ; and could not fail of securing their Service and Obedience to the Lord God of *Israel*. But their Behaviour was different from what might have been expected from them, and their Returns fell vastly short of their Obligations.

A People they were that had endured a long and a cruel Bondage from the Hand of *Pharaoh*, and his Servants ; and if Judgments could have humbled them, this was enough to have broke the Spirits of any People less obdurate than they were.

Being delivered from this Bondage, they sojourned in the Wilderness forty Years, where they were fed and sustained by repeated Miracles ; yet always murmuring and complaining, always rebellious and disobedient against God, and his Servant *Moses*.

Upon this, *Moses*, who was too well acquainted with the Temper and Spirit of this People, not to be aware of the Temptations they were most likely to fall into when they came into Possession of the good Land of *Canaan*, gives them repeated Admonitions and Advices to look back, and remember the Works of God ; in particular, how he heard their Cry in *Egypt*, and delivered them from

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from their Enemies Hands. He lays down this one Injunction, as of more Importance than all the rest, * Only take heed to thy self, says he, and keep thy Soul diligently, lest thou forget the Things which thine Eyes have seen, and lest they depart from thy Heart all the Days of thy Life. Thus again, in the Verses before the Text; † And it shall be, says he, when the Lord thy God shall have brought thee into the Land which he sware unto thy Fathers to give thee, a Land abounding with all good Things, — Then beware lest thou forget the Lord which brought thee forth out of the Land of Egypt, from the House of Bondage.

To forget the Lord, is an Expression rather figurative than proper; for no Man living sure can absolutely, and in a literal Sense, forget the God that formed and created him at first; that sustained and preserved him from his Youth up until now, and that daily pours down his Benefits upon him. But to forget the Lord signifies, to live as without God in the World, and to neglect those Duties which the right Remembrance of him sug-

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suggests to us, and requires from us. We do, in effect, forget him when we regard not the Works of the Lord, neither consider the Operations of his Hands : We do actually forget him when we neglect our Duty, and are utterly unmindful of our Obligations to him ; but we forget him most of all, when, through our Iniquity, Transgression, and Sin, we provoke his Wrath, and Indignation against us. When therefore, we are bid to *beware lest we forget the Lord* ; it is an Expression that amounts to a strong Charge that we should remember him in all the Actions of our Lives : That we should habitually preserve upon our Minds an awful Sense of his Majesty and Power, and a thankful Acknowledgment of his Mercy and Goodness ; That we should set the Lord always before us, and take him into our Consideration in all our Actions, Views, and Enterprizes : That we should have an eye to his Glory, and walk before him in Truth and Holiness, and perform all those Duties of Religion which the Remembrance of God ought in Reason to prompt us to.

So again, to remember the Works of God, implies not a bare and a fruitless Remembrance of them ; not a thinking on

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on them now and then, when we are in a pious Mood ; for after this manner every Thing that we know, will run in our Heads at certain Times : So far are we from having a perfect Mastery over our Thoughts, that the Things which we could wish were buried in the Land where all Things are forgotten, will occur to our Memories, at certain Times, without our leave, and rise up in our Minds to disturb and trouble us. But to remember the Works of God, implies, that our Hearts should be duly affected with a Sense of them ; That we should frequently, and on all proper Occasions, revive in our Memories, the Thoughts of them ; That we should look back on the Things which our Eyes have seen, and which it concerns us never to forget ; That we should often reflect and meditate on his inestimable Benefits in our most serious and retired Thoughts ; That we should give Adoration and Praise to that Almighty Power by which they were effected ; and above all, be careful to discharge all those Duties to God which are the reasonable Consequents of such a Remembrance.

The general Observation arising from the Passage before us, is this, That
Plenty

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Plenty and good Things make us forget ourselves, our Duty and our Dependence ; that when our Obligations are the greatest, we are the least mindful of them. A sad Reflection on Humane Nature ! and yet a Reflection that carries in it but too much Truth. The Case of *Israel* is too much the Case of Mankind ; and the Caution given to them may properly be applied, by every one of us, to ourselves. *When thou hast eaten, and art full, then beware, lest thou forget the Lord thy God which brought thee forth out of the Land of Egypt, from the House of Bondage.* For by their particular Redemption from the Land of *Egypt*, and the House of Bondage, we may properly enough understand every providential Deliverance of ours from Affliction, Calamity, and Distress, which calls for a Return of Gratitude and Praise. In this (I say) the Children of *Israel* are the Picture and Representation of Mankind in Miniature : Their Behaviour too plainly shews us what we all are when Distress and Misery come upon us, how we cry unto the Lord for Succour, and complain unto our God. It shews us what we are, when God has heard our Prayers, has removed the

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the Evil we endured, and delivered us out of our Distress : That instead of falling on our Knees before him, we turn our Backs upon him ; we unthankfully enjoy the Benefit, and rudely despise the Benefactor ; we forget the Author of our Deliverance, and lightly regard the God of our Salvation ; we greedily catch at the Blessing we were in want of, and go our way, and straitway forget what manner of Men we were.

And farther, This Passage also sets before us what we should be when we are in Possession of the Blessing we stood in need of from the Hand of God ; That we should offer unto him Thanksgiving, and pay our Vows unto the Most High ; That we should rightly consider, that every good and perfect Gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of Lights ; That 'tis God's Hand that feeds us when we are hungry, and cloaths us when we are naked ; That 'tis he that healeth all our Infirmitie, and with his Hand raiseth us from the Bed of Sickness, and lifteth us up from the Gates of Death ; That 'tis he that redeems us from Captivity and Misery, and brings us forth out of the House of Bondage. We must remember, that every Gift of God is good ;

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but yet, that his Gifts are only good to Us when received by us with Thanksgiving, and sanctified with Prayer and Praise. We cannot but confess that we are unworthy of the smallest Favours he bestows upon us; so that we must for ever renounce and disclaim all Merit and Deservings in ourselves: But when we prove unthankful for his Blessings, and even for the wonderful Deliverances that are wrought for us, in preserving our Life from Destruction, and crowning us with Mercy and Loving-Kinkness, what can we expect, but that such an unworthy Behaviour should provoke him to deprive us of the Light of his Countenance, to withdraw his Hand that supports us, and to let us sink into Misery and Sorrow? Shall the Commonness of God's Mercies depreciate their Worth, and lessen our Esteem for them? Or shall an uninterrupted Course of Health and Liberty, of Ease and Prosperity, make us forget our Vows which we made in the Day of our Distress? Shall our Peace and Plenty only lead us to forget the Hand that relieved us in our Wants? Or shall a continued Succession of new Benefits be suffered to supplant and deface the Memory of old ones? When God is kind

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kind to the Unthankful, and to the Evil, it is not to harden them in their Wick-edness, we may be sure; but that at length they may come to see, and know, and consider, that the Goodness of God ought to lead them to Repentance; and where it fails of this Effect, it betrays such an Ingratitude, such a Baseness of Temper, as is without Excuse, and is a sure Mark of a most disingenuous, impe-nitent, and incorrigible People. There is something in such a Behaviour so un-generous, so hateful, as is beneath the Spirit of a Man. This is a Degree of Ingratitude inhuman, unnatural, and even more than brutish; such as the Prophet *Isaiah* complains of in the *Jews* of his Time, and by God's Command, calls upon the whole Creation to bear Wit-ness of, to disclaim and detest; saying,

* *Hear, O Heavens, and give Ear, O Earth; for the Lord hath spoken, I have nourished and brought up Children, and they have rebelled against me. The Ox knoweth his Owner, and the Ass his Master's Crib; but Israel doth not know, my People doth not consider.*

They might not know, nor consider, but forget the Lord their God which

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brought

* Isa. i. 2, 3.

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brought them forth out of the Land of Egypt, from the House of Bondage; but so cannot Y O U who have this Day abundant Reason to rejoice in God's Mercies, and to give Thanks for your Deliverance.

I shall not therefore dwell any longer on the Ingratitude of the Jews; nor yet on that general Reflection, couched under this Passage of Scripture; but apply the ensuing Part of my Discourse to Your particular Case, and lay down some Admonitions and Directions, both for your present Behaviour, and for the future Conduct of your Lives.

You will easily perceive that the Drift of this whole Discourse has been to instruct you in the Duty of rendering Thanks to God for that Mercy and Deliverance you are going to be made Partakers of, and to preserve in your Minds a grateful Sense of his Goodness in this Day of Joy and Gladness to You, who, through the Indulgence of the Government you live under, are going to exchange Imprisonment and Bondage, for Liberty and Freedom; and to be truly thankful to God for putting it into the Hearts of your Rulers to commiserate the Wants of their Fellow-Creatures, to consider

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sider You in your low Estate of Life, which is render'd miserable to yourselves, and useless to the Publick, and to put an end to the Hardships and Sufferings of a Prison, which you have so long laboured under.

As God's Providence has entrusted me with the Charge of ministering to you in holy Things, and of instructing you in the Rules of Religion during your Confinement in this Place; and as you are now going to be happily removed from under my Ministration, to that of the Ministers of the Parishes to which you belong; suffer me, only by way of discharge of my Office, and out of a true Regard to your temporal and eternal Good, to give you some of my last Instructions from this Place, and let them abide with you for your Behaviour and Deportment when you come out into the World.

First, Then (after Thankfulness to God for your Deliverance) let your Gratitude express itself (as it well becomes you) in a dutiful Submission, and a willing Obedience to the Higher Powers that rule over you, who have been the Ministers of God to you for Good, and the Instruments, in his Hand, of conveying down this Blessing to you. They re-

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member'd you when you were in Bonds, as bound with you ; and they consider'd the Adversities you suffered, as being themselves also in the Body. Remember therefore, in return, with grateful Hearts, the Duty you owe to these your Benefactors, who, when you were in Prison, have ministered to your Wants, and have visited and redeemed you out of your Distress.

Henceforth, therefore, let no secret Disaffection to our happy Establishment lurk in your Hearts ; much less should any Railings, or Revilings, or Evil-Speakings, proceed out of your Mouths : For 'tis a Precept both of the Law, and of the Gospel, * † *Thou shalt not speak Evil of the Ruler of thy People.* But follow the Apostle's Directions, who hath taught us to make || *Prayers, and Supplications, and to give Thanks, for all Men, for the King, and for all that are put in Authority under him ; that we may continue to lead quiet and peaceable Lives in all Godliness and Honesty.* For this is good and acceptable in the Sight of God our Saviour.

In order to such a Temper, confine yourselves, as becomes you, within your proper

* Exod. xxii. 28. † Acts xxviii. 5. || 1 Tim. ii. 1, 2, 3.

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proper Spheres, your Vocations and Callings in the World. Meddle not with Things above you, as many do, to the Neglect of their own Business, and the Ruin of their Families. But, as St. Paul advises, see * *That ye study to be Quiet, and to mind your own Business, and to work with your own Hands; and to walk honestly; and to learn, and labour truly and diligently to get your own Livings; and to do your Duty to God and Man, in that State of Life to which his Providence shall call you.*

Secondly, I must not forget, by the way, to exhort and charge you to have a strict Regard to the Oaths that are to be administer'd to you, in order to your Discharge.

Let not the Desire of Liberty be of any weight with you, when it stands in Competition with the Oath of God: But be content rather to bear your Sufferings, than to violate your Faith, or wound your Consciences with wilful and deliberate Perjury.

Neither let the Desire of reserving something to support yourselves, tempt you to conceal any Part of your Effects from your Creditors. Deliver up fairly and

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and candidly to them all that the Law has made their Due. For consider rightly; that Justice and Truth must take place of all other Regards. Neither You, nor Yours, can have any Right to be maintained out of other Men's Goods, kept from them against their Wills, and in direct Contradiction to the Oaths you must take. This will be purchasing Liberty at the Expence of Conscience, and contracting so much Guilt, that your Heart will reproach you for it as long as you live.

Thirdly, Let me add this as a general Direction, which will be of use to you in every part of Life; *Consider your Ways.* The want of Consideration exposes us to Temptation, and many a Snare; and is the Cause of every wrong Choice we make. 'Tis the Occasion of all the Mis-carriages of our Lives, and of all the Evils that come upon us; and without it we can neither approve ourselves to God or Man. How many are there among us, that suffer themselves to be governed by Sense, without calling in the Aids and Succours of Reason, that dwell upon present Delights, without giving themselves Time to think of the Consequences of Things? Thus Men live by Chance, and act without Design, and catch at every pre-

present Pleasure that comes in their way. In vain do they boast of that excellent Endowment of Reason, when nothing of it appears in any Action of their Lives. But, alas! what have we our Reason for, but to use it, to consider our Ways, to compare Things wisely together, and to judge what will conduce most to our real Interest? Can we be such Fools as to grow sick of our Liberty, to submit to a voluntary Slavery, and to put our Necks under every Yoke? * *If thou be wise, thou shalt be wise for thy self,* says Solomon. Use your Liberty according to the Rules of Prudence and Moderation; but not so as to abuse it. The Rules of Virtue and Religion are not so rigid and severe, as to forbid you the Enjoyment of any Pleasure that is agreeable to Nature and Reason. Let no Man then be afraid of putting all reasonable Restraints upon his Passions and Appetites; for such a Use of Liberty is the sure way to preserve and increase it.

Remember, that the World you are going into is an evil World; a World abounding with Snares and Temptations to Sin: And remember withal, that much

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* Prov. ix. 12.

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depends on your setting out right at first. Begin, therefore, with shaking off, and leaving behind you, all those Vices, and evil Habits, which you may have contracted in this Place. As your Hearts will naturally overflow with Joy at that Life of Liberty which is restored to you, beware that that Joy be not expressed by Excess and Drunkenness, by Intemperance and Debauchery : For consider, that this will be setting out in those very Paths, and pursuing the same Steps which have led you into all your Misfortunes : This is such a Course of Life as will not only turn your Heads, and intoxicate your Understandings, but will shortly deprive you of that very Liberty which you are but just possessed of ; and will, and must, in the Nature and the Consequences of Things, bring you back to this Place, from whence you came. Stand fast, therefore, in the Liberty wherewith you are made free, and be not entangled again in the Yoke of Bondage.

But farther, I will not now enquire, whether it was through Misfortunes, or through Misconduct, that you came to this Place. I will charitably hope the best : But yet, consider, that your Confinement here has render'd you incapable
of

of supporting your Families, and made you unserviceable to the World. Resolve therefore to redeem the Time past that has been lost, and wisely to retrieve that useless Part of Life that has been spent here, by your future Diligence, and Industry in your respective Callings. Let your honest Labour, your Frugality, your Temperance, and Sobriety, be visible to all the World. For some, perhaps, there are in the World, that have been injured in their Property, and became Sufferers in their Fortunes by your former Extravagances, which have rendered you incapable of paying the Debts you had contracted, and satisfying the just Demands they had upon you. But your past Sufferings must melt them into Pity; and, if to this you add your future Well-behaviour, it can but reconcile all such in their Affections towards you, and make all your Enemies at Peace with you.

Be sure you never hereafter indulge and give way to a manner of Life above your Circumstances, or Condition in the World, or that does at all exceed the Income of your Labor; for this will involve you again in the Difficulties you have already suffered. Regulate your

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Way of Living, by the Rules of Prudence and Discretion. He that lives according to Nature and Reason, can never be Poor ; but he that lives according to Opinion and Fancy, will never be Rich. Let it be a Rule to keep rather within Compass, that you may, at all Times, have a Reserve to supply accidental Wants, and something to give to him that needeth.

Consider especially, that the Regard you owe to your Families, if you have them, and the Duty of making Provision for them, is of such a Nature, that a great Part of your Religion is to be express'd by it. If you have Wives and Children, that are unable to earn their own Bread, they have a Title, both by the Laws of God and Man, to be maintained by you, and to be fed and cloathed out of your Labor ; and if you neglect to do it, you are answerable to God, to Them, and to the Publick for that Neglect. Hear only what St. Paul says of such ; + *If any Man (says he) provide not for his own, and especially for those of his own House, he hath denied the Faith, and is worse than an Infidel.*

Again

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Again, *Fourthly*, Forbear the frequenting Publick Houses, and being heated with strong Liquors ; which not only introduces an evil inveterate Habit, but proves an Inlet to many Vices : It stupifies the Senses, and deprives Men of their Reason : It prevents Thinking ; and 'tis this alone that enervates and destroys the distinguishing Faculty of Man, and changes him into a Beast. Shall a Man then be a Slave to his Appetite, and like another † *Esau*, sell his Birthright of Liberty, for a Mess of Pottage, to regale his Appetite, or for a Draught of Drink to quench his Thirst ?

Remember the Parable of the * Prodigal Son; who was eager to have his Fortune in his own Hands, and had no sooner got it, but he fell into Extravagances, and wasted, and squandered away his Substance with Harlots, and riotous living, till he had reduced himself to that low Condition, as to be hired out to feed Swine in the Fields ; and his Wants were so pressing, and his Hunger so sharp, that he would have eat among them, and filled his Belly with the Husks that they fed upon. His Brain had been distempered with

† Gen. 25. 29---34.

* Luke 15. 11. &c.

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with high Feeding, but this low Living was Physick to him ; it cooled his Blood, and brought him to himself : This set him a thinking of what he had been doing, and made him bitterly reflect on his past Course : This brought to his Mind the plentiful Fare of his Father's House, and that the meanest of his Servants had Fullness of Bread, when he had none to eat : Now he would have been glad of the Crumbs that fell from the Servants Table. What then does he do ? Why, his Wants taught him Wisdom, and made him resolve to arise, and return to his Father, whom he had forfaken, to acknowledge his Unworthiness, and ask his Forgiveness. Upon this, the Bowels of a tender Father earned over him, and inclined him to pass over all the Follies of his repenting Prodigal.

If this be the Case of any among you, arise then as he did, and return at length from the Evil of your Ways : Acknowledge your Transgressions against your heavenly Father, and your earthly Parents, and say, *Father, I have sinned against Heaven, and before thee, and am no more worthy to be called thy Son.*

Lastly, For I shall only add one Advice more before I conclude ; and that is, Let

Let your past Suffering teach you this Piece of Wisdom, to owe no Man any Thing; to trust no Man so far with your Liberty, as to put it into his Power to deprive you of it, and make you his Prisoner. Can there be a greater Slavery upon Earth, or can there be a Mark of a baser Spirit, than to submit to such Circumstances, as to be afraid to see any Man living? What a Folly and Indiscretion is it, for a Man to bring himself into a voluntary Bondage, and to owe, even his Liberty, to the Courtesie of another? For the Debtor is the Creditor's Criminal, and he can sieze his Person when he pleases.

Remember this, and shew yourselves Men. Haste not, with the Bird, to the Snare of the Fowler, which he has been just delivered from; but let Discretion preserve you, and Understanding keep you in all your Ways.

As for you that remain under your Confinement, as not being qualified for a Discharge, according to the Intent and Meaning of this Act: Let only this Use be made of your present Sufferings, to confess the Righteousness of God in all that is brought upon you; to amend what is amiss in you, and to labour after those

Graces

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Graces and Virtues you stand in need of. May the Evils you endure, work your Good; and may the Punishing of your Bodies, be the saving of your Souls in the great and terrible Day of the Lord.

May your Creditors abate their Rigour towards you, whilst they consider you as Brethren, and themselves as Debtors also to God in an infinite Sum; and may this incline them to have Compassion on their Fellow-Servants, even as God has Pity on them.

In the mean Time, may God give you Patience under your Sufferings, and a happy Issue out of all your Afflictions.

And let us all beseech Almighty God to give us truly thankful Hearts, for all the Mercies of our Life past, and to grant us all true Repentance, and his holy Spirit, that the rest of our Life hereafter may be pure and holy, so that at the last, we may come to his eternal Joy, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

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